

An aerial night photograph of Los Angeles, California, showing a dense network of city lights and illuminated freeways. The image has a grainy, high-contrast aesthetic. The title 'BEGGARS HALL' is overlaid in large, white, bold, sans-serif font with a black drop shadow.

BEGGARS HALL

Los Angeles, California

Yet another dispatch from the post-authenticity capital of America



...So Beggars Group is going to California (insert song lyrics here) ? Looking to make it big in Hollywood or maybe just find a home on the left coast? Or a house at least: the rest is what you make it. It's a brilliant idea, as American as route 66. Everyone from Horace Greeley to the Village People knows that the thing to do for people with big dreams is to "go west" and make a place for yourself.

We'd like to help you; to put a few ideas on the table and a few pictures in you head. We'd like to offer our services solving some of your problems and maybe making, or at lest, posing some more of our own. We've put some of our thoughts into this book. Take a look at them and let's talk about how best to translate your desires into sheet-rock and studs and cubic yards of topsoil.

misfit architecture



IT MAKES A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF SENSE TO DESIGN THINGS FOR A PURPOSE AND USE THEM FOR THAT PURPOSE; the idea being to make a place for everything and put everything in its place. It's great when it works out, but life usually isn't that simple. Things change and nothing stays put. Some of the most interesting architecture out there is misfit architecture. Spaces used for new things they were never intended for, new ways of living and working shoehorned into, or rattling around inside the shells of the past. In New York, lofts are the ultimate misfit architecture; factories and warehouses turned into homes, studios and offices. While Los Angeles has plenty of light industrial space, the house is the basic unit we have to work with. Your project will have to fit office, living, production and event space into a building that was, more or less, built for someone's idea of a family to live in. The mismatch is going to cause a lot of conflicts that it will take clever design work to make something good out of. However, it is from this frisson and disjunction that much of the energy and interest in the project will come.

LET'S LOOK AT L.A.!



NETWORK NOT PROXIMITY

Los Angeles is a network city. It has neighborhoods, but its not a collection of neighborhoods like New York or London. Who you're next too isn't as important as who you're connected to. When you go out you can end up driving a hundred miles in a night: picking up, dropping off, dinner on one side of town, drinks on another, a show somewhere else then dancing, then off to the beach to watch the sun rise. There is nothing happening on the sidewalk: you don't stumble upon things.

IT'S THE CITY OF DRUNK DRIVERS.



SOCIABLE NOT PUBLIC

THE MOST BASIC, PERSONAL NODE IN A LOS ANGELES NETWORK IN THE HOUSE. If New York is a stack of boxes, these boxes being lofts, LA is field of houses. More complicated things like clubs and offices take on a domestic feel in LA. You drive up, park and go inside to where the action is. House parties are more important in LA and all parties feel a bit like house parties; you don't catch a cab or stumble onto the subway after, you may even stay over. Having a house in Los Angeles means having a place to have people over. It's not public, it's invite-only, but it's friendly and warm and open. Your house is your castle but it's also your stage, your set, the cradle of your own personal scene. Your house is the sartorial soapbox from which you tell the world what you think living is.

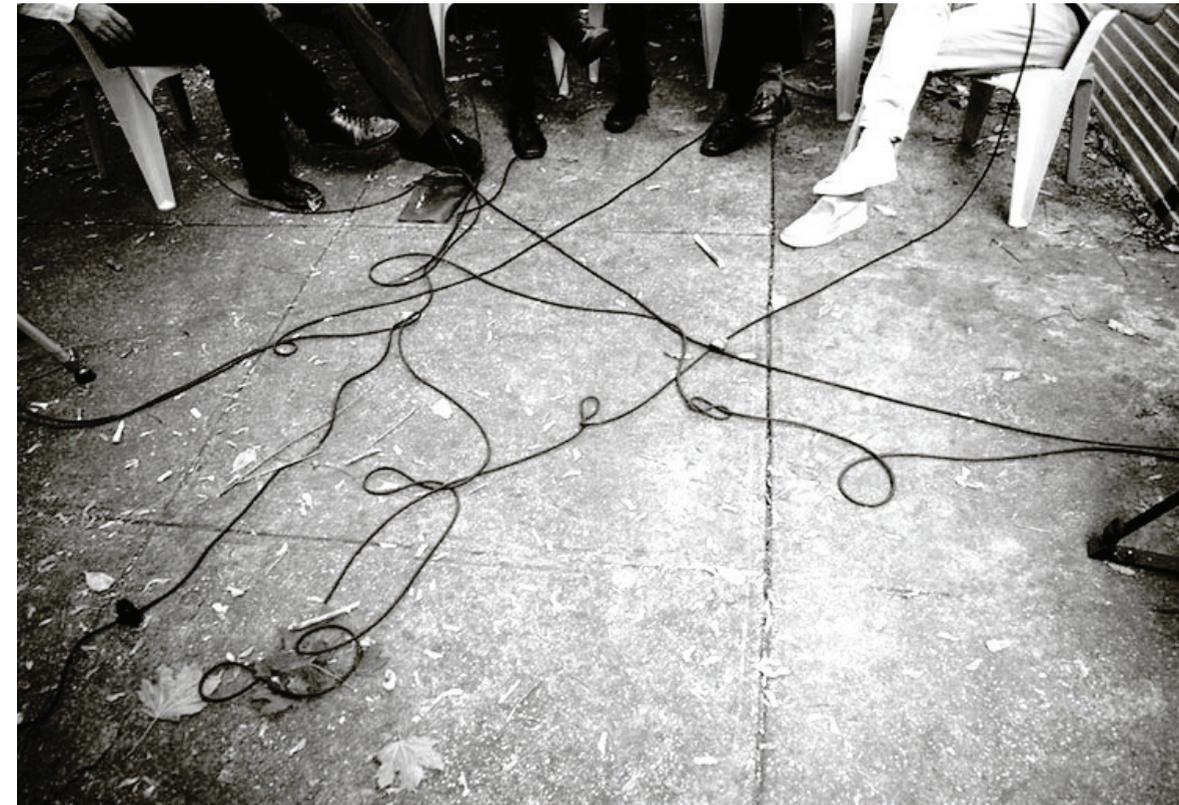


"IN 2009, ACTUALLY PAYING FOR MUSIC IS OPTIONAL, AND THE PURCHASE OF MUSIC IS OFTEN AN EXPRESSION OF WANTING TO BELONG (OR BE SEEN TO BELONG) TO A PARTICULAR COMMUNITY OF PEOPLE."

-PATRICK AMORY
MATADOR RECORDS GENERAL MANAGER

I'M LISTENING...

It's an old saw at this point that the Music Industry isn't selling music anymore, or at least it's selling a lot more than music, and that this is why the hulking dinosaurs of the industry are dying off and being replaced by the furry mammals of indie media who are warm-blooded and can generate their own heat. How you do this is up to you, but it seems certain that the house you build yourself needs to be a factory for producing culture and delivering it to your audience. It will have to be flexible and adaptable as what constitutes culture and how it is delivered, and even who or what the audience is.



REALITY = REALITY TV MINUS TV

Office, studio, performance venue, apartment: your house will have, or will have elements of all of these. The good thing about having these all together in one place is that they can all bleed into one another or switch places as the situation develops. It also means that the distinction will blur between back-of-house work and communications and on-stage or in-studio performance to be broadcast, recorded or watched. The house will look and listen and remember. It will be a set for staging events, producing media, live bogging, pod casting, informal improvisation, mugging for the cameras. It will be self-documenting, self-promoting, fully wired and always ready to go live.

the outside
is as important
as the inside

Say what you want about Los Angeles but the weather is undeniably amazing. This add this the fact that outdoor life takes place more in your private space than on the street as it would in a denser city and you end up with the conclusion that you need a nice yard. More than just nice, it needs to be a place that indoor life can effortlessly spill out into. Everything that goes on in the house can, and often should, happen outdoors as well. The backyard show is to LA what the rooftop concert is to New York. The barbeque is the cocktail party. Sleeping under the stars and working by the poo...well that's when it starts to feel like you're living the California Dream.



what could this be?

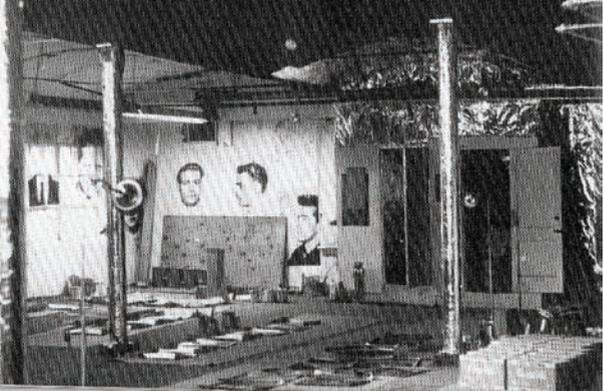




a house on the hillside

The house hanging precariously from a hillside with a sweeping view of the basin is a standard object of desire in Los Angeles. Classic locations for these houses are the Hollywood Hills, Pacific Palisades and Malibu (here with ocean views), but they can be found in any neighborhood with the necessary topography. Echo Park and the area around Griffith Park offer promising vistas close to Silver Lake and the funkier end of Hollywood.





A WAREHOUSE DOWNTOWN

Los Angeles warehouses tend to be big, low-slung cinderblock boxes rather than the picturesque concrete or iron framed lofts of New York and the Rust Belt. These, however, offer an array of conversion options ranging from building rooftop penthouse structures and stylish loading dock office designs to simply rolling up the gates and having a party in the shady, skylight, open space. An obvious location for a warehouse would be downtown, especially since this would put the project in step with city sponsored efforts to redevelop the area. Suitable buildings can also be found in Sliverlake, Hollywood or points west all the way to Venice or Santa Monica.





THE COMPOUND

WITHOUT COMING RIGHT OUT WITH THE WORD “CULT”, lets just say that collections of committed, single-minded people brought together by their idealism and a shared, charismatic vision often seek out collections of buildings set apart from the larger world. From the Microsoft to the Manson Family, a bit of seclusion and some room to spread out seems to be just the thing for organizations that think differently. Your “corporate campus” could be a ranch in Topanga Canyon, a light industrial site on a big lot downtown or something in between. The benefits of having a compound would run the gamut from practical to the infinitely more cosmic. A compound allows for separation of various activities from each other and provides outdoor space for parking, events and the opportunity to construct your own little bit of rock’n roll utopia.



THE MULLET HOUSE



BUSINESS IN THE FRONT, PARTY IN THE BACK. The standard suburban format could be repurposed to suit your desires. The front of the house would be the public face of the project with office space and reception going into the living rooms and dining rooms, apartments upstairs, and the noisy, fun stuff happening in the garage and basement and backyard. If your artists are garage bands who are making it big, perhaps what they need is a bigger, better garage to experiment in and new adopted parents who can give them more than just the keys to the station wagon. This site would have to be selected carefully since it would need to be separate enough from its surroundings to have its own identity and not precipitate conflicts with its neighbors. However, remix of the typical suburban house with a cottage or large garage in back could be a perfect venue for your project.





one ***BIG*** house

From Hugh Hefner's Playboy Mansion to Joni Mitchell's house on Lookout Mountain Road during the heyday of the Laurel Canyon scene, the idea of a house big enough to bring a whole culture under one roof is as compelling as it is enduring. You could opt to invest a bit more resources into the project and get something more secluded and opulent or you might look for a sprawling, down-at-the-heels mansion in a colorful, vibrant neighborhood and hope to blend in with the background noise. Either way, a big house could become the Manor house for your western realm, the frat house you always secretly wanted into, the place where something is going on all the time, the Los Angeles consulate for your tribe, a place where you can always come home to and where everyone always ends up in the kitchen.



PROJECT TEAM



SARAH COWLES

Sarah Cowles is a landscape architect and assistant professor at the Knowlton School of Architecture at The Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio. Her work is focused on the intersection of design, urbanism, art and ecology. Prior to her appointment at Ohio State, she worked at Tom Leader Studio in Berkeley, California where she was the project designer for the U.S. Consulate in Guangzhou, China and the Hunters Point Naval Shipyard in San Francisco, California. She holds an MLA from the Harvard Graduate School of Design and BFA in Sculpture from the California College of the Arts. This fall she is curating an exhibition entitled “The Monuments of Columbus” that includes drawings, models, mappings, experimental geographies, and sonic tours of imagined and projected futures for the landscape of Columbus, Ohio. Her website is www.ruderal.com. Sarah gets very defensive when Alan asks her why she still listens to Pavement.

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ALAN SMART

Alan Smart is an architect, itinerate design professor and former metal fabricator. He is finishing a one-year appointment at Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio and planning a return to New York City to start his own practice. Before taking a teaching position, he worked for Diller, Scofidio + Renfro as a designer and project manager for small-scale, technology intensive art and installation projects. Alan has also worked with a number of small, progressive architecture practices in New York, including Lewis Tsurumaki, Lewis, and has been involved in a number of residential and commercial projects involving interventions into existing sites. Alan received MArch from Princeton University and a BA in Architecture from the University of California at Berkeley. Having grown up in Los Angeles, lived in the San Francisco Bay area for seven years and New York for another seven, he feels himself to be thoroughly bi-coastal. While he is still learning to appreciate Pavement, Alan recently realized that Beggars Group bands have supplied much of the soundtrack to his life.

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